

YUSUF AND ZULEJHA IN ALBANIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

It is already proved by the historians that the Albanians, after establishing contacts with the Ottomans, were not only present in the administrative and government structures of that society, but they also found a special place in the field of the culture, where they became great artists of world reputation. The contribution of the Albanians is therefore undeniable in the literature, and using sometimes the alphabet and the language of the Empire they created major artistic works, which for their time could be considered masterpieces of the literature.

KEYWORDS: Government Structures, World Reputation, Masterpieces of the Literature

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INTRODUCTION

If we would take as an established truth the fact that the proper Albanian literature, in the meaning of non-religious, laic, representing the object of literary criticism, started with the poem of Muçi Zade in 1724, then we freely could say that the epoch of the Albanian literature started with the contacts of Albanians with Ottomans. Without no doubt a merited place deserve the works of Roman Catholic writers of the North, but it is a fact that these works remain in the circle of religious treatises, although representing many linguistic, cultural, sociological, and overall religious values. It means that as the date for the beginning of proper Albanian literature we have to consider the poem "My Lord, don't leave me without coffee", written in 1724¹ by Muçi Zade.

For almost six hundred years of the contacts of Albanians with Ottomans, especially during this period of time, i.e. after 1724, in contrast to using Latin alphabet Roman Catholic writers, we have a number of authors with artistic literary works, who adapted the Arabic characters to the demands of the Albanian writing.

Because of the religious subjects from Islam, that part of the old Albanian literature takes the name Albanian Islamic literature, created in Arabic (Ottoman) alphabet, sometimes even in Ottoman language, and usually based on subjects and motives from Orient.

The starting with Muçi Zade particular period of the Albanian literature continued up to the 20th century, producing during this period a considerable number of works very important not only for the Albanian literature, but also for the literature of the Balkan peoples in general.

One of the subjects which without any doubt produced some of the most particular values in our literatures is the Koranic tale on Yusuf and Zulejha, represented at the work of various writers in different shapes, first of all embodied through the major poems by Muhamed Çami, Hafız Ali Korça, but also by some minor poets in smaller poetical texts.

Original Article

¹ See: Mahmud Hysa, *Alamiada shqiptare I dhe II*, Logos-A, Shkup, 2000.

Cultural identity of *Yusuf and Zulejha*

If we accept the division of the Albanian Islamic literature in two major periods, according to the time in which the works of this literature were created, then Muhamet Çami, who was the first to write in Albanian the poem *Yusuf and Zulejhaja (a burning love)*² belongs to the second period of the Albanian Islamic literature. As it is known, this is not the single work written by him.³ He published a number of other poems in Albanian, written with Arabic, and mixed Turkish and Arabic characters.⁴

These works of the great Albanian author, written in two major languages of the Orient, pose before the scholars the problem of the cultural identity of Muhamet Çami's creations, a problem till now very little treated in critical writings.

Muhamet Çami is not the first and the only Albanian poet writing in Albanian language with Arabic, and Arabic-Turkish alphabet. Among the sources which contributed to the formation of Çami in the field of the writings in Oriental Languages a particular place has the living tradition from the poets of the first period, founders of this type of versification like Baba Tahiri, Nezim Frakulla, and Haxhi Ethem Tirana. The cultural preparation, the education in Egypt, and links with that local tradition influenced on Muhamet Çami to start the road of the creation according to Oriental norms.

The expression in foreign languages not only for Çami, but also for the other Albanian authors like Sulejman Naibi, Nezim Frakulla, and later Naim Frashëri, and others, represented a way to affirm their talents before entering the difficult road to create the culture and the literature of their nation. Moreover, with their work of self-abnegation they became its promoters and great reformers, bringing into it the experience of the great cultures of Orient.

'Yusuf and Zulejha' belongs to the Albanian culture in as much as this stamp is determined by the Albanian character of its author; meanwhile the characteristics of the poem throw light on the relations with the poetical tradition to which it belongs. This identity is not only determined by the language, its source is the spirit and the totality of the poetical values formed according to the pattern of an artistic tradition.

Only in the frame of this cultural climate, and in close connection with this poetical experience we can understand the poetry of Çami and throw light on a new dimension of his personality as an Albanian author.

The presence of the poem *Yusuf and Zulejha* in the Albanian literature

In our literary historiography the Islamic literature, or as it is known in the tradition of the Albanian studies, the literature of Bejtexhi, very often was considered on the base of prejudices, and as a result it was marginalized. In this frame the poem *Yusuf and Zulejha* by Muhamet Çami experienced the same destiny.

On this occasion it is worthwhile to underline, in connection with the study of the work *Emni Vehbije* by Tahir efendi Boshnjaku,⁵ the opinion expressed by the academician Idriz Ajeti "...towards this inheritance Albanian and foreign linguists, on our opinion, took a standing position of sure indifference if not of contempt."⁶

To this opinion of our distinguished linguist, Prof. Ajeti, we would add that not only the Albanian and foreign

² Muhamet Çami, *Yusufi e Zulejhaja – Dasburi përrëluesë*, Shtëpia botuese veftjake Hasan Tahsini, Tiranë 1992, p. 5.

³ The merits for a masterly transcription into Albanian of the work 'Yusuf and Zulejha' belong to Osman Myderrizi who also gave the first data on the author and the poem in 'Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore' 2/1955.

⁴ Dhori Qiriazi, *Yusufi dhe Zulejhaja*, Perla 1/1999, p. 75.

⁵ Mr. Hajdar Salihu, *Poëzia e bejtexhinjeve*, Prishtinë, 1987 p. 212.

⁶ Idem, p. 3

linguists had a contemptuous attitude to this trend, but also the men of literature, critics, and Albanian culture in general disregarded it and were not interested to make researches in this important field for our culture, literature and inheritance.

The above expressed assertion doesn't deny writings in the history of literature on Nezimi, Hasan Z. Kamberi and Muhamet Çami,⁷ Bejtixhi authors, published in the fifties of the past century, but these papers were very small in number, limited and often wanting to the measure that there even were informations aiming the destruction of this corpus of works. As a result its echo remained on the margins of the Albanian cultural and scientific interest. Regardless of the deficiencies of the studies on Albanian Islamic literature, we should with respect mention the zealous work of the researches of this heritage like Osman Myderrizi, Hasan Kaleshi, Idriz Ajeti, Ismail Ahmed, Mehdi Polisi, Mahmut Hysa, Muhamed Pirraku, Hajdar Salihu, and some others. Theirs was a great work, but it is very modest in comparison with the huge amount of the cultural inheritance still remaining not studied on the due scale. Another question to be underlined in connection with this corpus of works still to be traced in full is the presence of a number of incompetent Albanian scholars involved in this field properly because the most part of them do not know the language of these cultural treasures. We do not fully deny their contribution, but this is a very limited contribution because of the lack of knowledge concerning the very essence of the Albanian Islamic literature, i.e. its language.

In addition to this, another serious obstacle to the study of this literature is represented by the content and the thematic constituent part of the Islamic literature.

Considering the religious thematic content of this form of artistic creation it seems that the existence of a justified consciousness is forgotten, and that under that religious consciousness there are living voices of Albanian human, social and national life. Therefore everything created in Albanian language by Albanian authors is of Albanian character regardless of the forms, shapes, and contents.

We can conclude that within the National Renaissance literature the continuity of that literature is not traced, and moreover this literary movement is not integrated into the processes of the Renaissance literature. The very existence of the movement is testified by many authors of the period like Zef Jubani, Jani Vreto, Naim Frashëri, Sami Frashëri, and others, who with admiration speak on many Islamic writers. It is understandable that the exclusion of the Bejtixhi movement from the Renaissance stream is a consequence of a prejudice on the Islamic literature, and of an inertia in the research work, in which everybody follows the predecessor, and nobody dares to study this literature according to its peculiarities.

A specific feature of this literature is its developing in all Albanian territories, within and outside the borders of Albania. In this context it should be noted that in Kosova this literature made its appearance very early, during the 18th century, and it closely followed the National Movement. For this reason it deserved and still deserves a more serious approach to its study, as well to the collection of the respective writings in the most cases scattered in personal libraries.

It is sufficient to mention that this type of literature from the point of view of literary historiography is only present on two pages of the History of Albanian Literature, a fact which speaks about the indifference to this corpus so large in its volume, and of ponderable content.

We think that a team of competent researchers, with a good knowledge of Oriental languages should work on this historical, cultural, and national treasure, so as to throw light on it, and to enrich our culture with as much as possible objective data from the historical and cultural past of our people. We hope that one day this historical stage will be

⁷ See: Group of authors, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe I-II*, Enti i Botimeve shkolllore, Prishtinë, 1975, p. 191.

highlighted, and the Albanian history and culture will be supplied with correct and more objective information.

Poem Yusufi and Zulejha, and the Albanian writers

• Yusuf and Zulejha, and Muhamet Çami

Muhamet Çami gave to the Albanian spiritual life a number of works belonging to various genre and type. On the foundations of Albanian spiritual culture he put his great poems, and the 18th century brings to us the echo in the history of the Albanian culture recalling the life, the culture, and the accomplishments of that century.

The poem *Yusuf and Zulejha* created by Muhamet Çami if included within the dimension of the period of the 18th century represents a poetical form masterly produced within the poetical structure of the Albanian poetry. His poem displays the spiritual state of the individuals and the collectivity, simultaneously revealing the different social states of a particular period.

Being an original work the poem *Yusuf and Zulejha* by Muhamet Çami gave to him a merited place in the Albanian literature, and not only the Albanian literature. The poem comprises 2430 distichs telling the best story from Qur'an⁸. It is a narrative poem based on Qur'an. The subject is the well known tale of the peripeteias of Yusuf son of Jakub in the space where the tribe of Keenans lived.

Another aspect of Çami's poem is to be searched in its extra-Quranic dimensions, especially in its structure, characters, and artistic performance. It seems that this creative support our poet found at the first world romanticists, Firdousi⁹, Jammi and Attari, who were distinguished in this literary genre among the major literatures of Orient. In this way the poetical structures of this type from the Persian romanticism were also brought in and influenced as a voiced echo the work of Çami.

It means that our poet was profoundly acquainted with the Oriental literatures, and on this basis aimed the incorporation of a part of the highest world art into Albanian literature following the models of the great Persian authors.

To take this major step Çami didn't lack the courage nor the knowledge of the development and the trends of the world literature. Above all it was his talent that permitted to him to elaborate in Albanian language a new theme of inspiration, and a part of the Islamic history, with a great number of historical and religious persons, who would be in his work the most realized characters.

The poem *Yusuf and Zulejha* by Çami here will be considered from the point of view of its presence as a poetical creation in the Albanian literature, without going further to the comparative approach of this type of works with the other Albanian writers. According to the version given in this poem, the development of the story has an advantage, the chronological unrolling resulted more pragmatic in maintaining the identity of the events.

Muhamet Çami begins the poem with a single demand addressed to *Haku* (God), asking his help in order that this event would be better understood by the people. On the subsequent lines Çami gives the Yusuf genealogy and his family provenance.

⁸ *Kur'ani përkthim me komentim*, përktheu dhe komentoj: H. Sherif Ahmeti, Kryesia e Bashkësisë Islame për RSS, Prishtinë, 1988, Chapter Yusuf: 3.

⁹ Nerkez Smailagić, *Leksikon Islam*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 480.

The live and marvellous picture on which is constructed the full event our poet gives through a dream in which 11 stars and the Moon and the Sun prostrate to Yusuf:

And in one of these nights

Yusuf sees in his dream

Exactly eleven planets,

The Moon prostrating and the Sun.¹⁰

The story almost follows Quranic *ayahs*. Yusuf told the dream to his father, and he recommended not to say anything to his brothers. According to poet, it was clear that Yusuf was dearer and more respected by the father, and as a consequence the brothers prepared his liquidation.

Said they: father doesn't care of us

As long as he shall have this son,

Let us find the way

Him to end the life.¹¹

The presentiment of Yusuf that a wolf might eat him is expressed in anticipation. After the brothers accomplished their crime they returned to the father to tell him the tragic act of Yusuf torn by the wolf.

The sons came, he asked

And told them: Why do you weep?

- The wolfs ate Yusuf,

Here is his bloody shirt.¹²

In reality the brothers had thrown Yusuf down to the bottom of a well to wipe any trace of him, but from there he was saved by a caravan travelers. After being saved from the well, Yusuf was taken by some merchants who wanted to sell him, and so it happened, he was very cheaply bought in Egypt by a dignitary. According to poet, the dignitary wanted to rise him up in order to adopt him as a son.

He brought him home

And said to his wife:

Receive him honourably,

He may provbe useful to us.¹³

Now it is the life of Yusuf widely told. He grew a handsome young man and his beauty attracts everybody in the house. Zulejha, the wife of Aziz, was the first to provoke him and in this way begins the biggest test for Yusuf's character.

¹⁰ M. Çami, op. cit., p. 13

¹¹ Idem, p. 15.

¹² Idem, p. 25.

¹³ Idem. p. 32.

The events flow with accelerated rhythm. She sought to seduce him, but Yusuf said to her, that Allah forbid and started pushing her away. Zulejha became more aggressive and she tore his shirt from behind. This would serve as *corpus delicti* for the wife. A witness testified, that if his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth and he is a liar. The signs were clear, but the situation deteriorated to condemn the innocent. The imprisonment resulted as the greatest test for the Prophet hood.

A large place in Çami's poem is given to the blames on this occasion by the women in the city. This is a reflection of the true world and of the life reality.

The malicious talk went around

Women blamed Zulejha:

The wife of our Aziz

Dishonored all the world.¹⁴

The treatment of life reality in Çami poem is in full correspondence with the real world. Zulejha continues to insist on her innocence, she sent for the cunning women to look at Yusuf and to convince them that she is innocent. The meeting was organized by the means of a banquet for them in her palace. Çami gives it in full detail:

Zulejha asked all of them:

Why are you so amazed,

You cut your hands,

And blooded is your dress.¹⁵

To further limit the *corpus delicti* she convinced her husband to imprison Yusuf.¹⁶ The imprisonment of Yusuf would testify through him that Allah Hears and Knows everything

The story goes on with Yusuf meeting two young men entering the prison with him. They asked from him the interpretation of their sad dreams, and he told them that the matter is decreed about the first to be released from the prison, and the second to be crucified because he attempted to poison the king.

The dream is taken in the poem as a psychological product of the human imagination, and it occurs three times: Yusuf dreaming his childhood, the two prisoners, and the king. The two first dreams follow each other in chronological order, and the third, the dream of the king will be a great test for his life.

The king saw in a dream seven fat cows which were eaten by seven lean ones, and seven green ears of corn and other seven dry ones. Nobody of the present chiefs was able to interpret them. The one of two who had been released and now at the service of the king remembered Yusuf being able to do the interpretation. He asked to be sent forth, and to bring Yusuf before the king. Yusuf explained the dream, but to the king's messenger he said: Go back to your lord and ask him to inquire what was the matter with the women who had cut their hands, what was his sin against them. The king made

¹⁴ Idem, p. 49.

¹⁵ Idem, p. 51.

¹⁶ In the History of Albanian Literature Çami's poem ends with the marriage of Yusuf with Zulejha. It is an incorrect statement, because the story in the poem follows the tale in Quran. Affirmations of this type damage the compositional unity of the work, its basic idea and the conception aimed by the author.

inquiries, and they admitted that they committed evil deeds, they lied, and Yusuf was a clean man.

The figure of Yusuf now ascends. As soon as the big lie is discovered, the whole scenario to ruin Yusuf's integrity emerges in clear light. Afterwards Yusuf is appointed over the storehouses of the land. The time has come for the dream of the king to come true. All around the world a terrible drought happened., only in Egypt there was plenty of grain because of the good arrangements made by Yusuf:

Nothing remained in Egypt,

Everything was ruined,

People became slaves

To be saved from the death.¹⁷

The drought also spread to the birthplace of Yusuf, Keenan or the present day Palestine. Not long afterwards the Yusuf brothers came in search of provision. It was they that condemned him to death, and forced him to undergo through hard sufferings and tests of the life:

The servants have the order

To take good care of these people,

They are my relatives,

But they must not recognize me.¹⁸

The story in the poem enlarges and is in detail elaborated, still correctly following the Quranic tale. Yusuf did not disclose himself to the brothers, and put to them as a condition the next time to bring a brother of them, Benjamin, his half-brother, otherwise they would not have any measure. Jacob, Yusuf's father was shocked by this demand, because he already suffered a loss in the case with Yusuf. Finally he decided to accept, and to send Benjamin:

And Jacob accepted

To send all of them,

And Benjamin was permitted

To go together with the others.

The events take a very different direction. Yusuf suffered during all his life, and now he was able to decide the course of the events. Under the condition put by Yusuf the brothers were obliged to take with them and bring to Egypt Benjamin. Yusuf told the true story only to Benjamin. According to the poem, Yusuf invented a new strategy to bring to his place the aged and tired by the life father, Jacob, aiming to join together the whole family in Egypt. He put a golden drinking cup in his brother's saddle bag. Benjamin was declared a thief, and as a consequence he was to be held as a bondsman. In this way the father too would come to Egypt.

The poem tells in detail how the brothers conferred secretly not to let Benjamin in Egypt because of the word they gave to their father. Therefore they left the oldest brother with Benjamin, and returned back to their father. When the father

¹⁷ M. Çami, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁸ Idem, p. 87.

heard the story he could not believe them:

*A very great misfortune it was
To loose three brothers,
Forty years he endured,
And he knew the tricks.*

The course of the events from this point rush forward, Yusuf writes a letter to the father, Jacob, and invites him to come and to take himself Benjamin:

*Quickly he wrote a letter,
Asking him to come to Egypt,
By the will of Allah
The son will be given to him.*

It seems that the father on the base of the handwriting, and the thoughts expressed in the letter understood that only the lost Yusuf could write such things. The father answered to him with following words:

*If you release my son,
Allah will reward you,
You already know
All my misfortunes.*

After this correspondence between Yusuf and his father, the truth is discovered, and the father learns the real course of the story, recognizing his son Yusuf. With his brothers Yusuf sends to the father a shirt, instructing him to medicate his eyes with it. The father followed his instructions and his eyes healed up. Then Jacob together with his sons traveled to Egypt and visited Yusuf. He met them with honor. The poem ends with the family joined, and glorifying Allah:

*After the long road
They met outside Egypt,
Praying Allah
Who made them meet together.*

- **Yusufi and Zulejha, and Hafiz Ali Korça**

Yusufi me Zulejhanë a më e bukura e ngjarjeve¹⁹ (Yusuf with Zulejha or the best of all stories) is an original poem which procured to Hafiz Ali Korça a deserved place in the history of the Albanian literature. The creation of this work testified the true maturity of the author, and its ability to treat the same literary subjects that were treated by the well known classics of the Persian, Arabic and Turkish literature.

¹⁹ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Yusufi me Zulejhanë a më e bukura e ngjarjeve (absen-ul-kasay)*, Shtypshkronja Elbasani, Elbasan, 1342-1923.

Once again Quranic theme is at the center of the poem ‘Yusuf with Zulejha’ by Hafiz Ali Korça.²⁰ We find in the poem the same order of the events following Quran. The poem comprises 3104 distichs.²¹ Like Omer Khajam in Persian literature, Ashmad Shewki in Arabic literature, and Nezim, Muhamet Çami, and others in Albanian literature, the author uses four lines stanzas.

Hafiz Ali gives an artistic description of the events not going far away from the original inspiring him conception of Quran.

The Quranic subject in Korça’s poem we find first of all in the identical precept resulting from its content and construction. Moreover, there are identical high morality, human dignity, Islamic patience, the invitation to accept the monotheistic Islamic religion, and the victory as the consequence of all peripeteia of Yusuf’s life.

In the poem ‘Yusuf with Zulejha’ the belief in the predestinated by God Creator and Foreordainer human fate is dominant. The fate here is presented as Allah’s will, as supernatural power versus man, who is impotent to decide his fate. The human life thus is predestined and there is no care or attempt that could change the course of the predestination.

The poem begins with a dream. From the top of a mountain densely wooded and full of clear springs Yusuf speaks:

One day the son told to father:

In the dream I mounted to the top²²

In the poem Yusuf saw eleven planets, together with the sun and the moon. The father heard him and recommended not to tell the dream to anybody else. But the author makes him to speak about the dream with one of the brothers, and is this way it became known to all of them.

The plot of the brothers against the Yusuf is the beginning of the dream to become true. In the following lines Korça artistically gives the discontent of the brothers towards the father. The discontent is largely explained in the poem, and it touched everybody:

Why our father

Yearns so much to him?

If one day doesn’t see him

At once mad becomes.²³

In the poem is included the agreement to punish Yusuf. This is a collective plot between the brothers. They decided to throw him down into the depth of a well. The concordance between the brothers for such a crime is linked with the Islamic rules against the murder. It means that the brothers regardless of their hate against Yusuf, knew very well the Islamic stand against murder and its consequences, so they decided not to kill him, and limited themselves with the above mentioned act.

²⁰ Mahmud Hysa, *Alamiada Shqiptare I*, Logos-A, Shkup 2000, p. 169.

²¹ Dr. Ismail Ahmed, *Hafiz Ali Korça – Jetë dbe vepra*, Logos-A, Shkup, 1999, p. 167.

²² H. A. Korça, op. cit., p. 5.

²³ Idem, p. 6.

Then the author tells us about Yusuf being saved from the death and his transfer to Egypt. The poem shows Yusuf saved alive from the well, and this fact is explained by the protection and benevolence of the angel Gabriel. The travelers of the caravan passing by the well put him out because of Gabriel's teachings. A big bucket was used to bring Yusuf out of the well. At the beginning he was kept as a slave in Egypt, because he was considered a merchandise, and according to Korça there was a good competition in buying him.

The poem gives an artistic depiction of the king's palace, the marvelous life in it, the nice gardens and running waters, reflecting the life and its beauty.

The events interesting Korça in his poem are the life of Yusuf in the palace, the attempts to seduce him, and the threats to his life. Zulejha tried in many ways to involve him in an dishonorable love. She sought to make love with Yusuf in Aziz's house. When all her temptations to attract and convince Yusuf failed, the act of incrimination followed. Zulejha also incited by her women friends put an indictment against Yusuf and asked his imprisonment.

On the opinion of Zulejha the imprisonment would be the only way to convince Yusuf to accept her love.

Yusuf fell a victim to the cunning of a rich woman, who was convinced that the fate of the man was in her hands. Nevertheless Yusuf had the firm belief that he was unjustly indicted and condemned, therefore during the whole time in prison he was ready to suffer, but not to surrender to the invitation of Zulejha and her female companions:

O God! says the condemned,

Better for me is the prison.²⁴

The interpretation of the dreams is an occasion for the author to reveal the inner world of Yusuf. According to the poem, God learned him how to interpret the dreams. The only case for dream comments was during the time he was in prison. Two young men entered the prison with him. They asked him to tell them the interpretation of their dreams.

The interpretation of the dreams is used by Korça to reveal the inner life of Yusuf. It is necessary to mark out the third dream, a dream of the king, who was in search to find an interpreter. One of the two prisoners who had been released, heard of king's request and told him about Yusuf, who rightly interpreted his dream.

The author gives the same version of seven fat cows which were being eaten by seven lean ones, and the seven green ears of corn and other seven dry ones.

Yusuf commented the dream as a warning that there would be seven years of severe drought and misery. Based on this, he asked a rigid frugality to face the drought. Properly this interpretation signed the end of the long and full of accidents and experiences life of Yusuf. A new page was opened to Yusuf.

The moral triumph is reserved to Yusuf in the following pages of the poem. Many other barriers were raised in his way, but following the high precepts of Islam, he had new ethical and moral achievements. His nomination as supervisor of the storehouses of the land was connected with his sound human integrity. In this context is projected his victory in the poem *Yusuf with Zulejha* after Zulejha and her female companions admitted the evil deeds against him. In the same way all other cunnings, deceits, and plots against Yusuf are disclosed.

The nomination of Yusuf as the responsible for the storehouses of Egypt according to the author is in concordance

²⁴ Idem, p. 60.

with his human values and corresponds to his moral notions.

The first contacts of Yusuf with his brothers follow as part of the poem. They happen during the years of drought and misery foretold by the king's dream. The prediction was that years of famine would descend on Keenan, Syria and Lebanon.

The brothers came to have provision. The wise Yusuf did not chase them away without nothing, and he asked them the next time to bring to him his half-brother, Benjamin.

Traveling of Benjamin to Egypt was not an easy task for his brothers and his father. Jacob lost his trust in his sons because Yusuf disappeared without trace. He never believed the bloody shirt as a testimony that he was eaten by the wolfs.

He saw the shirt intact,

Understood what they had done.

My sons, told them, I am confused

And bewildered by this fact

That Yusuf was lost,

But his shirt is not torn.²⁵

It is clear that the father doesn't believe his sons. The fact is present in the words of Yusuf, when he tells to the brothers that if they will turn without Benjamin, they will not have more provision. The poem continues with the brothers that repeat these words to their father, otherwise they would remain without food. At first, because of the bitter experience with Yusuf, the father did not accept to permit Benjamin going with them, but afterwards he agreed.

The moral abasement of the brothers in the poem *Yusuf with Zulejha* by H. A. Korça is revealed in the meeting of Yusuf with Benjamin:

Here is Benjamin you asked

Without him not to come.

He met them with respect

And doing honor to them.²⁶

But in the poem the criminal act against Yusuf is transformed. His brothers envy inciting them to incrimination is transformed in the heart of Yusuf in tolerance, mercy, good understanding and brotherly love.

The meeting of the whole family at Yusuf in Egypt is interpreted as an act of high Islamic ethics, realized in a rare figure in the history of mankind. The meeting in Egypt is depicted painful and deeply emotional, full of family pain and love.

²⁵ Idem, p. 14.

²⁶ Idem, p. 90.

*A meeting full of pain,
With mourn and sorrow,
Everybody weeping
After so many years of separation.²⁷*

The meeting was arranged with Yusuf invitation. After thirty years of separation eleven brothers and their parents meet together in Egypt to start a fully new life. The extra-Quranic theme in the poem *Yusuf with Zulejha* by Korça gives to it a larger breathing, including new episodes and the toponymy of the surroundings, as well as other extra-Quranic characters, and especially involving a subjective lyricism with bursts of emotions, pains and bereavement. The space in which the characters move around is larger in the work by Korça, and the places have their names.

He mentions Sham, Keenan, Palestine, which are not mentioned as geographical names in the respective Surah of Qur'an. A number of characters, namely Maliq, Bazija, Sheman and Juda, on our opinion, are borrowed from the Persian literature.

Maliq is one of the travelers in the caravan who saved Yusuf from the well, meanwhile Bazija is one of the nicest girls, who enters in conversation with Yusuf. In the poem she is represented as a young girl falling in love with Yusuf when he was at the king's palace.

Among the themes with lyric bursts we would isolate the song *The Marriage of Zulejha with Yusuf*. It should be noticed that this marriage is celebrated with the permission of Allah:

*From the Most Merciful Allah
A greeting to you blessed king!
For you Zulejha was chosen
The betrothal in Heavens was decided.²⁸*

In this chapter a sincere love of the wedding couple is described together with the conjugal relations. In retrospective the characters remember their past full of concern and sufferings. Zulejha in particular underwent through hard psychical traumas.

The other song, ‘The death of Yusuf’, is a beautiful elegy in which are exposed the human virtues and the image of Yusuf, as well as his separation from Zulejha full of emotions and sorrows.

Full of emotions is also the song “The death of Zulejha”, which Korça motivates with the hard trauma after the death of her beloved husband, Yusuf. She goes everyday to his tomb, full of sufferings because of this death, and she expresses her sorrow for the loss of the dearest man with following lines:

*She was loudly crying:
My soul! How did you abandon me?
There was not any regret,*

²⁷ Idem. p. 102.

²⁸ Idem, p. 81.

*What is this life without you?*²⁹

- **Yusuf and Zulejha, and Andon Zako Çajupi**

The love theme of Yusuf and Zulejha was also taken by our poet Andon Zako Çajupi, in the poem *Zolejka*, which has a special place among the lyrics of Çajupi. It is a very limited poem if compared with the works of the two former authors, but it is noteworthy that Çajupi elaborated it as an important theme, about which he had a good literary and historical knowledge.

Çajupi begins the poem with an introduction to Egypt. The action goes on more dynamically, together with preliminary description and the information on the nature of Zulejha.

The dialogues and the action bear the stamp of Çajupi's creative individuality. The author avoids a detailed description of Zulejha's passion for Yusuf, and it is only understood that she doesn't love her husband. Zulejha as a character is given at the beginning through well turned details and figures of speech, in which her beauty is emphasized:

Where from did you sprung

*Zolejka with the sun on the front.*³⁰

Then the author through a number of particularities depicts her privileged life. But the full development of the character is achieved in the scenes with Yusuf, when an impetuous passion is expressed by her words showing the readiness to betray the husband, and to fulfill her goal.

The character of Yusuf (Josef) is mainly revealed through his words, addressed to Zulejha when he pushed her away, testifying his courage and honesty.

An important place in the poem is reserved to the contrast – the contrast between two opposite characters – Zulejha (Zoljeka) and Yusuf. We could say that the author succeeded in creating typical characters. Thus Zulejha expresses herself in the most aristocratic and typically degenerated way. In the poem the lyric interventions of the author are intermingled with a particular stand, which from time to time becomes objective.

The Çajupi's poem is characterized by the fluent style through the folk octosyllabic verse, and the popular flavor is also achieved with the similarity of the action and author's way of thinking. The poem ends with the unjust condemnation of Yusuf (Josef), leaving out the whole large event, which is in full developed with historical and literary aspects in the Oriental literatures. Despite of this, we think that the author was well acquainted with this literary form, and would have been possible for him to give to this so well known and beloved subject for the Albanian and world poets a larger and fuller space.

The poem on Yusuf and Zulejha in Çajupi work is not a separate volume, the elaboration of this theme is only a testimony of the range of the poet's culture, and throws light on a short moment of his creative activity. He was a distinguished poet, and at the same time a good connoisseur of the great cultures.

It is the merit of the Albanian Islamic authors of the 16th-17th centuries that the Islamic literature entered in the Albanian literature, and in this context it is the merit of the major works by Çami and Korça with their well known poems

²⁹ Idem, p. 106.

³⁰ A.Z. Çajupi, *Baba Tomorri*, Kairo, 1902, p. 79.

on Yusuf and Zulejha. Çami and Korça followed the traces of a rich tradition, giving to this motive a new sound, expressed in the enlargement of the love theme, as well as in the general intonation characteristic for such a theme.

Poems on Yusuf and Zulejha by Çami and Korça show the image of their time, started the elementary forms of the lyric in the Albanian literature, beginning with the earliest work of Çami, and arriving to the 20th century with Korça. In this way their poems became bearers of the Oriental aspirations, and created the possibility to elaborate this type of literature through the centuries.

CONCLUSIONS

Though Çami and Korça belong to two different and distant periods, they have a common subject and an identical inspiration, and above all they have the courage and creative ability to treat such a serious theme, cultivated by world renown romanticists like Firdeousi, Jamm, Attar, and others, at the same time on the base of that theme they brought in the Albanian literature wonderful artistic creations.

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